

No More Guns in School

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Student’s Safety vs. Gun Violence

In the 2016 to 2017 school year to the 2017 to 2018 school year, there was a 113 percent increase in incidents of violence in K-12 school districts (Erwin, 2019). Among those in the 2017-2018 school year was the school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland Florida. The Parkland shooting resulted in the loss of 17 students and faculty (Erwin, 2019).

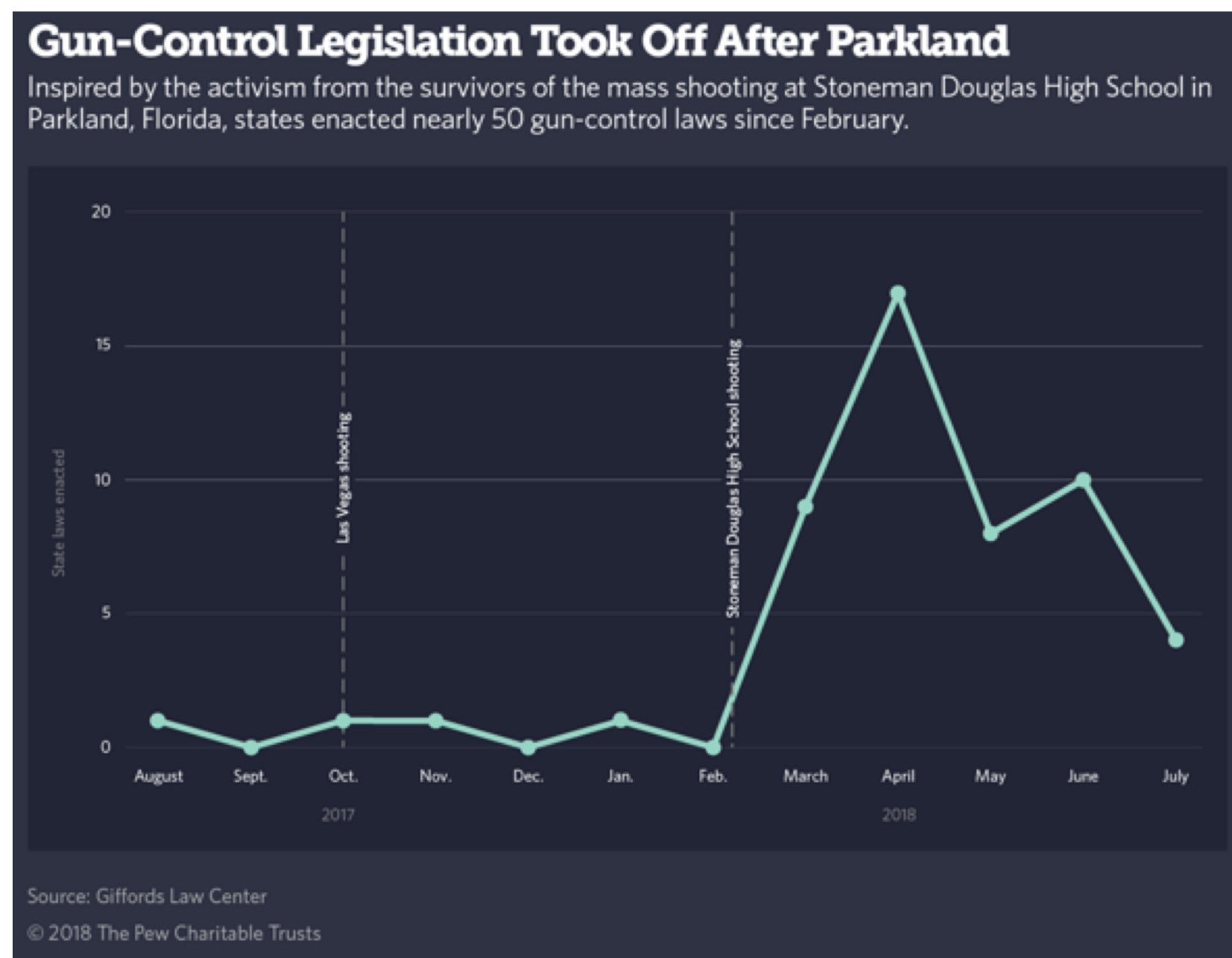


Figure1. Gun-Control Legislation Took Off After Parkland. Vasilogambros, M. (2018, August 2). PEW. *PEW*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2018/08/02/after-parkland-states-pass-50-new-gun-control-laws>
The response to the shooting was tremendous with forty-three of fifty states deciding to take action; this resulted in the proposal of 392 bills related to improving school safety. Of these, 87 of them were enacted or adapted (Erwin, 2019). The bills included plans for developing standard emergency response plans and drills, funding updates in building security, firearm possession allowances for school staff, training for school resource officers, and improving mental health awareness and services, to name a few. On the federal level, the main focus was to support the state governments. For example, they provided resources and grant funding for increasing safety in schools (Erwin, 2019). Before analysis the data, we must consider what the exact definition of a school shooting is.

What is considered to be a school shooting?

- An incident...
- Where a firearm was discharged
 - Where any individual, other than the suspect or perpetrator, has a bullet wound resulting from the incident
 - That happen on K-12 school property or on a school bus
 - That occur while school is in session or during a school-sponsored event

School Shootings in 2018:

Injuries & Deaths

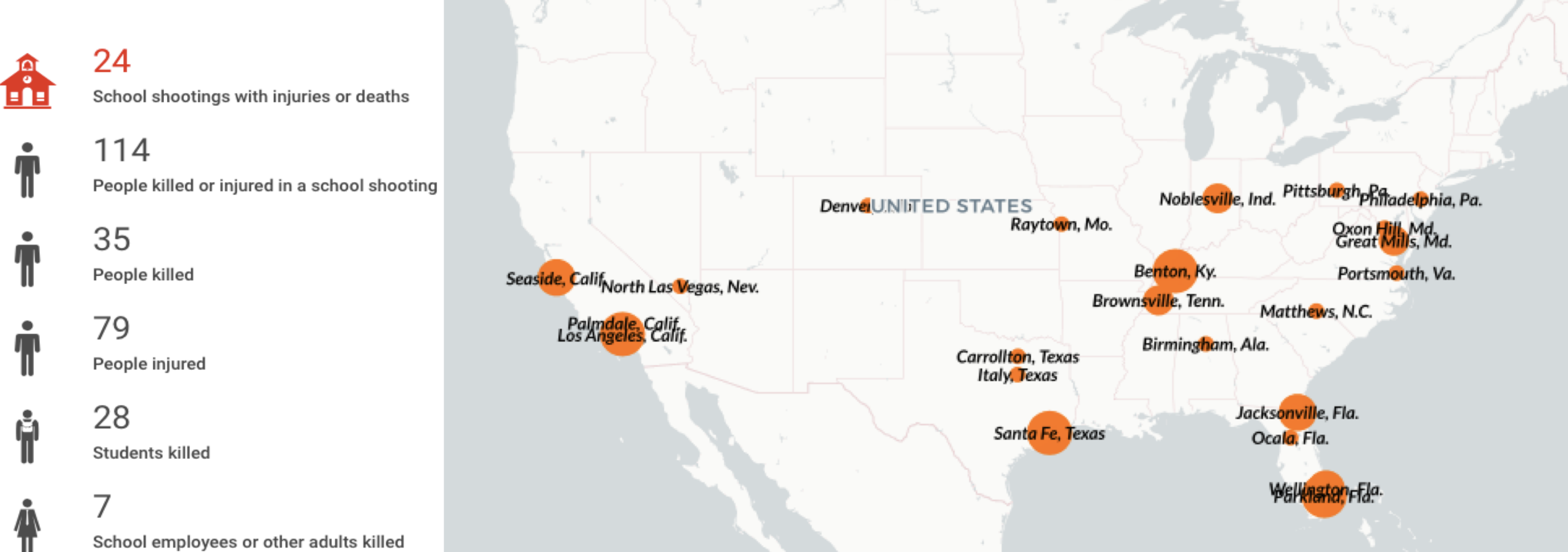


Figure 2. Where the Shootings Happened in 2018
Maxwell, L., Peele, H., & Superville, D. R. (2020, March 18). Education Week. *Education Week*. Retrieved from <https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/school-shootings-this-year-how-many-and-where.html>

Although all of the aforementioned bills have been put in place, we are still witnessing a substantial amount of violence in schools. Clearly, action has been taken, but are schools safer for it? The answer is yes, to some extent. However, weapons, more specifically guns, are still making their way to campuses around the country, putting student and faculty lives at risk.

School Shootings in 2019:

Injuries & Deaths



Figure 3. Where the Shootings Happened in 2019
Maxwell, L., Peele, H., & Superville, D. R. (2020, March 18). Education Week. *Education Week*. Retrieved from <https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/school-shootings-this-year-how-many-and-where.html>

School Shootings in 2020:

Injuries & Deaths



Figure 4. Where the Shootings Happened in 2020
Maxwell, L., Peele, H., & Superville, D. R. (2020, March 18). Education Week. *Education Week*. Retrieved from <https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/school-shootings-this-year-how-many-and-where.html>

There have been six school shootings so far this year, in 2020 (Decker & Blad, 2020). The number, however, only accounts for January, February, and some of March. Due to the coronavirus pandemic and schools being closed, the number of school shootings are more than likely lower than they would be if school was still in session. After analysis how many school shooting there have been and where school shooting have occurred within the last several months, by state, I decided to research three states’ school safety policies. I researched what policies states have implemented and measured their effectiveness by the school shooting statistics provided above. I decided to focus my research on Florida, New York, and Texas, and their school safety and gun control policies.

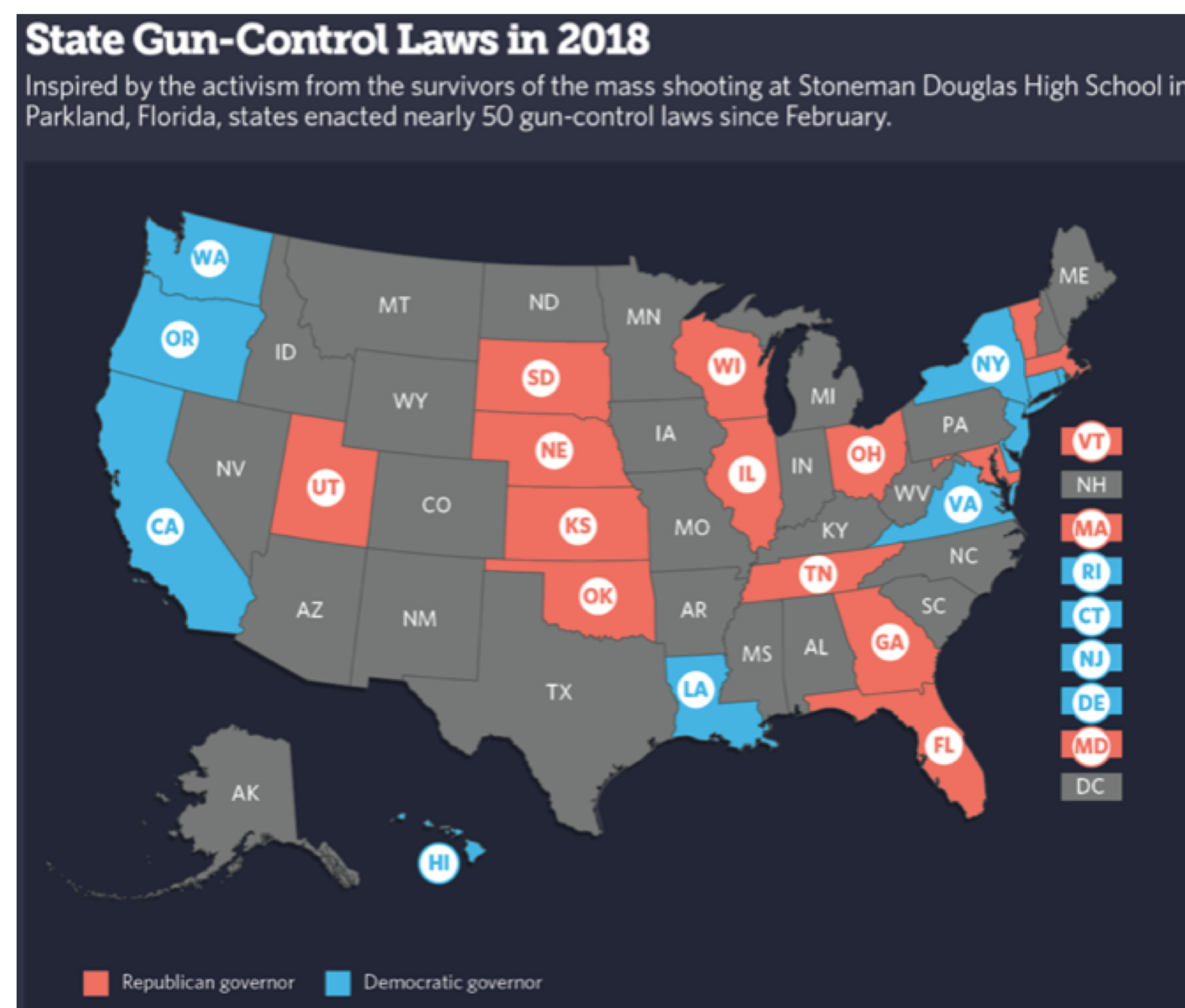


Figure 5. State Gun-Control Laws in 2018. Vasilogambros, M. (2018, August 2). PEW. *PEW*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2018/08/02/after-parkland-states-pass-50-new-gun-control-laws>

Florida

I chose to research Florida because the Parkland shooting took place here. Florida implemented the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act (MSDHSPSA) in 2018, following the shooting (Solodev, 2018). This act included the the creation of a school safety office and commission whose responsibility are also outlined in the act, creation of a mobile suspicious activity reporting tool, requirements of new mental health services and trainings, requirement of school safety officers in every school, school safety assessments for every school, and funding for school safety needs (Solodev, 2018). Florida also, in March of 2018, implemented the Red Flag Law (Williams, 2019). The Red Flag Law permits people, including law enforcement, family, or other third parties, to ask the court to remove an individual's gun(s) if they are concerned about that individual (Dunn & Levinson, 2019). If the court finds the individual to be dangerous in any way, law enforcement takes procession of their weapons for a certain amount of time. During this time, the individual is not permitted to buy or sell guns (Dunn & Levinson, 2019).

Since the implementation of the the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act and the Red Flag Law in 2018, there has been a decrease in the number of school shooting in the state of Florida and a change in the manner of the school shootings. When looking at the 2019 school shootings in Florida, there are much less people involved and much less, if any, casualties (Decker & Blad, 2019). So these policies have proven to be an improvement in school safety but not a permanent fix. There are still gun related acts occurring on school campuses in the state of Florida.



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New York

I chose to research New York to analysis and compare what my home state is doing to improve school safety. As you can see from the data maps, New York has not had a school shooting within the last couple years. This could be due to the policies New York has put into place, like the NY SAFE act. The NY SAFE Act, or the Secure Ammunition and Firearms Enforcement Act, is a gun regulation law that was implemented in 2013 (New York State, 2013). The NY SAFE Act is designed to keep guns off school grounds and school buses, and support school districts in creating and implementing effective school safety plans (New York State, 2013). The success of the NY SAFE Act is clear in the recent records of school shootings within which, New York is not present.

New York has continued to step up and make more legislation in order to increase school safety. New York put the Red Flag Law in effect as of August 2019 (Dunn & Levinson, 2019). As already stated, the law is used to confiscate guns from individual's that seem to be in a threat to themselves or others. New York continues to improve and implement school safety policies even though they have not witnessed shootings and tragedy in recent years.

Texas

It is only the beginning of 2020, and Texas is leading the country as the state with the most school shooting (Decker and Blad, 2020). That’s why I chose to also research Texas, and the school safety policies they have decided to implement after the Parkland shooting.

As I was researching Texas’ response to the Parkland shooting, I found out there had been another mass school shooting that year in the Texas of state. The Santa Fe High tragedy resulted in 10 dead and 13 wounded (Samuels, 2019).

As a result of both the Parkland shooting and Santa Fe tragedy, Texas proposed the Senate Bill 11 (Samuels, 2019). Senate bill 11, “instructs school districts to implement multihazard emergency operation plans, requires certain training for school resource officers, ensures school district employees — including substitute teachers — are trained to respond to emergencies, and establishes threat assessment teams to help identify potentially dangerous students and determine the best ways to intervene before they become violent”(Samuels, 2019). However, there was not any further pursue for school safety policies after this.

As I continued my research, I came across the Red Flag Law yet again. The state of Texas is currently still not on the list (Dunn & Levinson, 2019). This is supported by the map to right which reveals New York and Florida’s support for gun-control laws in 2018, and Texas’ lack of support.

When beginning my research and thinking about what my policy proposal would look like, I was focused on schools and what could be implemented on that level. I started my research on the state level to see the response after the Parkland shooting and the Santa Fe High tragedy. To my surprise there had been an extreme amount of attention and support for better school safety policies, and overall making schools a safer place. There were several bills and policies implemented that involved better action plans in times of crisis, improved mental health services, new requirements for resource offices, and any thing else you can think of. However there was a lack of attention on better security in schools, and ways to improve that aspect of school safety. Additionally, the recent school shootings are cases where there was one person shot in a fight or someone had a gun on them and accidentally shot someone, or other situations along those lines. The new school safety policies may be working but there are still students, faculty, and others in danger of being victims of gun violence because people are still bringing guns on to school campuses. So I decided I wanted to take a different root for my proposal, a root that seemed to be missed in the past.

Policy Proposal

The goal of my proposal is to protect my target population, students, faculty, and others present on K-12 school districts, from the continued threat of gun violence. We have clearly seen in the past how students and faculty have been victims of gun violence through active shooter incidences. Even though this is less of a concern, there are still incidents of gun violence occurring in school parking lots and at school sporting events, for example.

There must be a push for better security and detection of weapons before they are brought onto school property. If schools can keep people with weapons from even getting close to school property, then the risk of violence would be greatly decreased. However, this will not always be possible, which means the response to acts of violence at schools involving guns must also be augmented and improved.

I propose a policy that bans the procession of any type of weapon on school campuses other than the resource officers of the school. There no purpose for any school personal to have possess a weapon, specially a gun, on campuses; other than the law enforcement whose job is to protect the students and faculty.

However, the issue of guns on school property goes beyond any school security policy; there must be greater action taken from state governments to implement gun-control laws. We have seen a decrease in the number of school shootings on campuses after states like New York and Florida chose to implement them. The safety of our schools is too reliant on outside laws to risk not having secure gun-control laws.